BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

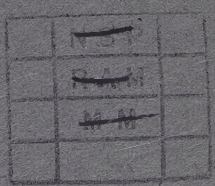
REPORT

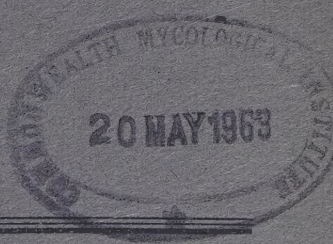
OF THE

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FOR THE YEAR

1958





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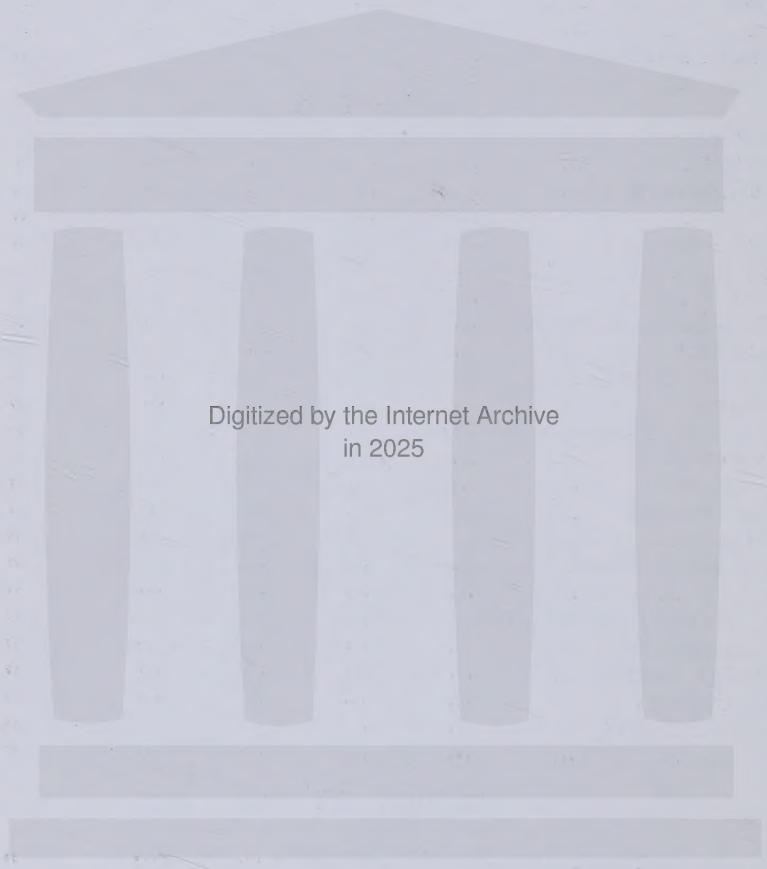

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STAFF

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Chief Stockman	R. Hodge
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Section I

REVIEW OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

1. Weather Conditions

Weather conditions were on the whole favourable to agriculture throughout the year. Total precipitation as recorded at the Agricultural Station, Road Town, Tortola reached the unusually high figure of 60.88 inches, being the highest recorded in five years. Distribution was good.

The total rainfall for 1958 represented a marked increase or 24.10 inches over the figure of 36.78 inches for 1957. The total rainfall for Anegada in 1958 was 32.63 inches as compared with 20.70 inches in 1957. Arrangements are being made for the establishment of four additional rain gauges in different parts of the Colony early in 1959.

Much to the advantage of the Colony, no tropical disturbances were reported in its vicinity during the year.

Monthly rainfall figures for the Agricultural Station from 1949—1958 are set out in Appendix I.

2. Sugar Cane:

There is no sugar industry in the Colony, but sugar cane which is grown principally for the manufacture of rum is given much attention due to the satisfactory prices obtained for rum in both the local and export markets. The Department is endeavouring to make available new varieties to farmers.

3. Limes:

A considerable increase is shown in the export of limes compared with 1957. The export value in 1958 was U.S. $312.00 compared with U.S. $193.00 in 1957.

4. Coconuts:

The export value shows an increase of $681.12 over 1957. The quantity exported in 1958 was 24,954 nuts, a decrease of 3,343 compared with 1957. The increase in value is attributed to higher prices being paid in the export market. Coconuts are also in great demand locally for consumption as well as the extension of new areas.

5. Bananas:

Exports of bananas again declined considerably compared with 1957. Exports for the year amounted to 1,944 stems as against 2, 223 in 1957. The reason for this decline is due to the fact that there is great demand in the local market where good prices are obtained.

6. Food Crops:

The production of ground provisions and vegetables showed an outstanding increase compared with previous years. Fair quantities were exported to the Virgin Islands of the United States with no effect on the local consumption.

It is gratifying to record that praedial larceny presents no serious problem to the cultivator of food crops in the Colony.

7. Livestock:

(i) **Cattle:** Interest in cattle raising was at a high level throughout the year and progress made in pasture development was extremely good. Favourable weather conditions were accountable for most of the regains in loss of weight which was experienced in 1957.

Exports continued to both the French West Indies and to St. Thomas V.I.U.S.A. for slaughter during the year. Heifers were also exported to Montserrat for breeding purposes.

The general health of the cattle population in the Colony was very satisfactory. No serious disease was encountered.

The prices paid for cattle are as follows:—

Cattle sold in St. Thomas — 16 c. — 17c. per lb. liveweight
„ „ Tortola — 14 c. — 15c. „ „ „

(ii) *Sheep & Goats:* There was keen interest in sheep and goat raising and breeding stock from the Agricultural Station for up-grading was made available, although the demand often exceeded the supply.

With the exception of a few cases of worm infestation, general health was satisfactory.

(iii) *Swine:* Steady gains have been made in the production of pigs both in quality and numbers. Prices remained stable during the year; exports, however, have shown an increase of 111 pigs as compared with last year. Due to the efforts of the Department over a number of years, the predominating breed is Berkshire.

No cases of swine fever has been encountered during the year. Inoculations against this disease continued as a preventative measure.

(iv) *Poultry:* Interest in Poultry was stimulated by both the local hotel demand and local preference for fresh meat and eggs. There are considerable possibilities in the expansion of this industry but lack of capital and relatively small consumers demand may be limiting factors. Practically all feeding stuffs are imported.

(v) *Horsekind:* The breeding of horses, mules and donkeys continued during the year. There is still evidence of interest in breeding horses for racing as well as for transport. Mules and donkeys are used principally as pack animals. There were some exports of horses and mules to the French West Indies. (Horses 15, Mule 1)

8. Agricultural Exports:

Livestock: Table I sets out the number of animals exported during 1958 compared with 1956 and 1957. Table II analyses the exports of livestock according to type and sex.

Table I

EXPORTS — 1956 — 1958

Year	Destination:	Cattle	Sheep:	Goats:	Swine:	Total:
1956	St,. Thomas ...	325	278	1,202	440	2,245
	French West Indies ...	937	—	—	—	937
	Puerto Rico ...	—	—	—	—	—
	Leeward Islands ...	2	—	1	—	3
	Totals	1,264	278	1,203	440	3,185
1957	St. Thomas	404	767	1,249	557	2,977
	French West Indies ...	704	—	—	—	704
	Puerto Rico	—	—	—	—	—
	Leeward Islands ...	—	—	—	—	—
	Totals	1,108	767	1,249	557	3,681
1958	St. Thomas	409	382	836	668	2,295
	French West Indies ...	759	—	—	—	759
	Puerto Rico	—	—	—	—	—
	Leeward Islands ...	67	—	—	—	67
	Totals	1,235	382	836	668	3,121

Table II

TYPE & SEX ANALYSIS OF EXPORTS 1958

TYPE:	SEX:	No:	TOTAL:
Cattle	Bulls	504	
	Steers	—	
	Cows	484	
	Heifers	247	1,235
Sheep	Rams	135	
	Wethers	2	
	Ewes	245	382
Goats	Bucks	315	
	Wethers	11	
	Does	510	836
Swine	Boars	80	
	Barrows	202	
	Sows	386	668
			3,121

Other Agricultural Products: A summary of the value of the principal exports for 1958, compared with 1954 — 57 is set out in Appendix II.

SECTION II

WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

A. INTRODUCTION

1. The work of the Department is concerned chiefly with the promotion of livestock production, animal health and in particular, the management of the Tortola Agricultural Station and Livestock Farm. Other activities include the following:—

(a) The provision of planting material to farmers.
(b) Forest protection and soil and water conservation.
(c) Administration of Agricultural and Fisheries loans.

B. TORTOLA AGRICULTURAL STATION AND LIVESTOCK FARM

2. Area and Location:

The Tortola Agricultural Station and Livestock Farm is situated approximately a quarter of a mile from Road Town proper. The area, 68 acres, is devoted almost exclusively to the production of breeding stock for sale to farmers. A small area is used for experimental planting and other purposes.

3. Cattle:

The herd maintained by the Department is kept for the purpose of demonstrating livestock raising and to improve breeding stock for distribution to farmers. The herd is purely of $\frac{3}{4}$ Red Poll x $\frac{1}{4}$ Senegal. Eighteen calves were born during the year. Of this number, twelve were bulls and six heifers. Two heifers and one cow died. The heifers died at birth. Twelve cattle, eleven of which were bulls and one cow, were sold to local farmers for breeding purposes. The herd at the Department now comprises:—

Bulls	*Bull Calves*	*Cows*	*Heifers*	*Total*
2	7	12	10	31

4. Horses:

Apart from horses which are kept for riding, a thoroughbred stallion is usually maintained for stud purposes but, unfortunately, the thoroughbred stallion "Saber Dancer" died during the first half of the year, He suffered a fractured shoulder and had to be destroyed. Efforts are being made to obtain another thoroughbred stallion to replace him.

5. Kentucky Jack Donkey:

"Colonel Dunway," the pure bred jack used for stud purposes, maintained excellent condition throughout the year. The demand for his services is still very great.

6. Mules:

Two mules are kept for draught purposes. They maintained good condition during the year.

7. Blackhead Persian Sheep:

The excellent condition of this flock was maintained throughout the year. Nine lambs were born of which four were rams and five ewes. A total of thirteen (eight ewes and five rams) were sold to farmers for breeding purposes.

8. Berkshire Pigs:

These maintained good condition. During the year, six piglets were born of which three were boars and three gilts. All the piglets were sold to farmers for breeding purposes. One boar which was no longer serviceable was destroyed on account of age.

9. Anglo-Nubian Goats:

The condition of these animals was well maintained during the year. Eight kids were born of which five were bucks. One buck and one doe died a few days after birth due to exposure. One buck and one doe were sold to farmers for breeding.

10. Stud Services:

Below is a record of stud services by Government owned sires kept at the Tortola Agricultural Station and Livestock Farm.

Stallion "Saber Dancer"	6
Jack "Colonel Dunway"	31
¾ Red Poll x ¼ Senegal Bull "Chamberlain"	2
,, ,, ,, ,, ,, ,, "Comando"	10
Anglo-Nubian Buck Goat	5
Blackhead Persian Ram Sheep	3
Berkshire Boar	25

11. Distribution of Planting Material:

The propagation of economic and ornamental plants continued throughout the year. Distribution and sale of plants were as follows:—

Cabbage seedlings	9,480
Tomato seedlings	2,784
Egg plant seedlings	2,040
Sweet potato cuttings	5,170
Cassava cuttings	840
Grafted Mango Plants	192
Ornamental Plants	141
Onion seedlings	9,300
Mahogany seedlings	405
Mahoe seedlings	30
Lettuce seedlings	1,512
Sweet pepper seedlings	1,428
Papa seedlings	144

C. INVESTIGATIONAL WORK

12. Sweet Potatoes:

Of several varieties tried, the B44 variety has done best under local conditions and has proved popular with farmers. Cuttings were in great demand.

13. Pangola Grass

A nursery is maintained and a number of smaller nurseries were established on private farms under the supervision of the Agricultural Staff (see also paragraph 16).

D. EXTENSION AND DEVELOPMENT WORK

14. Inspection Service:

An inspection service was maintained during the year both for the exportation and importation of animals and plants.

15. Animal Health:

(i) *Treatment of sick and injured animals:* Increasing demands were made on the Staff of the Department for the treatment of privately owned stock and for advice on matters of management and disease control.

There were no cases of swine fever during the year but, 582 inoculation were given as a preventative measure.

No cases of anaplasmosis and piroplasmosis were encountered during the year.

Five cases of tetanus were encountered of which two were successfully treated.

(ii) *Tick Control:* The programme of voluntary dipping which was organised on the cessation of the compulsory dipping campaign continued throughout the year. There is considerable keeness on the part of the farmers in ensuring that their cattle are kept free from ticks. Treatment of equines with Gamatox to eliminate the horse tick (dermacenter mittens) has also been successful.

16, Grassland Management:

The eight five-acre plots referred to in last year's report which were established for the purpose of demonstrating to farmers improved methods in pasture management have done extremely well in some areas but in others for example, Virgin Gorda and Jost Van Dyke, growth has been slow and patchy.

The demonstration is meeting with success in Tortola and considerable interest has been aroused among farmers who appear to be convinced of the value of pangola grass and are steadily increasing their plantings. Over 500 bags of pangola grass were distributed to various parts of the Colony during 1958 and, exclusive of the demonstration areas, it is estimated that 60 acres have been established since the commencement of the demonstration.

17. Forestry:

As a result of a recommendation in 1957 by the Agricultural Adviser of the then existing Development and Welfare Organisation, arrangements were made for a visit to the Colony of Mr. H. Fraser, Conservator of Forests, Windward & Leeward Islands who arrived here in 1958. The purpose of his visit was to investigate problems of soil and water conservation and to make recommendations for the protection and re-establishment of wooded areas.

During Mr. Fraser's visit he covered thoroughly the island of Tortola and recommended a programme of conservation and gut protection and the establishment of nurseries for the free issue of fruit trees to owners of land in protected areas. This programme and other recommendations by Mr. Fraser are being put into effect as rapidly as possible.

18. Soil and Water Conservation:

Soil conservation work under the guidance of the Department was continued during the year. In addition to the installation and maintenance of contour barriers, advice and encouragement to farmers were given by the staff of the Department on the importance of maintaining soil fertility.

19. Market Gardening:

As a result of the decline in food production which was mentioned in previous Reports of the Department of Agriculture, consideration was given to the establishment of a Pilot Project in Market Gardening as an experiment to demonstrate and promote the production of green vegetables.

The experiment was started very late in 1957 under the supervision of the Department and to date, it can be said to have been most successful. It is hoped that it will be possible to make available loans for such purposes in the future.

20. Agricultural Credit:

Agricultural Credit is designed solely for the purpose of pasture improvement. Loans issued during the year amounted to $6,595.00 compared with $10,326.00 in 1957. The total acreage which has been improved to date with loan funds is estimated at 2,000 acres of which 660 acres comprises new lands brought into cultivation. Loans issued in 1957 and 1958 were as follows:—

Old Scheme (Agricultural Credit Fund)

1957	39 loans
Cash	$9,976.00 U.S.C.
1958	11 loans
Cash	$2,320.00 U.S.C.

Repayments to 31st December, 1958 amounted to $4,646.52 U.S.C.

New Scheme (Pasture Improvement Fund)

1957	2 loans
Cash	$ 350.00 U.S.C.
1958	27 loans
Cash	$4,275.00 U.S.C.

Repayments to 31st December, 1958 amounted to $628.81 U.S.C.

21. Fisheries Credit:

During the year the development of the fishing industry was centred on making available loans to fishermen for the purpose of purchasing fishing gear and engines. There is evidence that this assistance has increased the supply of fish in the local market as well as the surplus for export.

Loans issued in 1957 and 1958 were as follows:—

1957	22 loans
Cash	$6,005.00 U.S.C.
1958	14 loans
Cash	$4,070.00 U.S.C.

Repayments to 31st December, 1958 amounted to $757.16 U.S.C.

22. Agricultural Shows:

Due to the severe drought conditions it was not possible to hold the annual agricultural shows in 1957, however ,with improved weather conditions it was possible to hold them in 1958. The shows were held at the following places.

Valley, Virgin Gorda, 24th November,
Great Harbour, Jost Van Dyke, 25th November.
Road Town, Tortola, 4th December.

All three shows were well attended and were of a very high standard as compared with previous years. The standard of the Livestock was excellent and entries were numerous. The pastures exhibited were very good which reflects the keeness of the farmer with regard to management of his pasture.

23. Visitors:

Visitors to the Department included the following:—

His Excellency, Sir Alexander Williams, K.C.M.G., M.B.E., Governor of the Colony.
His Honour, G. P. Allsebrook, Administrator of the British Virgin Islands.
Mr. H. Fraser, Conservator of Forests, Windward and Leeward Islands.
Mr. R. Marshall, Animal Health Advisor to the Secretary of State.

Section III

24. Colonial Development and Welfare Schemes:

The following schemes relating to agriculture are in operation.

Scheme D—2787 ("Fisheries Credit Fund")	*Total Grant*
The purpose of this scheme is to make available credit to fishermen and thereby increase the production of fish for export and local consumption.	$11,200.00
Scheme D—2788 ("Grassland Management")	
The purpose of this scheme is to train farmers in improved methods of grassland management.	$14,000.00
Scheme D—2717 (42) ("Pilot Project in Market Gardening")	
The purpose of this scheme is to demonstrate to market gardeners the improved methods in market gardening.	$ 1,400.00

Section IV

25. Summary of Agricultural Legislation

There has been no change in the legislation relating to agriculture during the year.

M. Winter.
Superintendent of Agriculture.

Appendix 1

AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT, TORTOLA, BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

RETURN OF RAINFALL

From

January, 1949 to December, 1958

MONTH	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	10-yearly monthly average
JANUARY	1.45	5.04	1.74	6.49	3.35	2.18	1.16	2.80	2.27	4.57	3.10
FEBRUARY	2.59	9.32	.97	.83	1.01	4.47	1.23	2.72	1.48	2.53	2.72
MARCH	4.29	1.69	.46	1.48	2.94	1.36	1.49	1.62	2.13	.83	1.83
APRIL	1.27	3.82	1.11	7.38	1.11	1.68	2.83	1.94	1.11	4.14	2.64
MAY	2.70	.20	9.56	1.84	1.37	1.84	2.16	3.28	1.45	13.20	3.76
JUNE	7.06	1.67	5.37	2.72	8.60	4.10	3.20	6.97	2.98	8.45	5.11
JULY	3.95	3.13	4.91	9.15	3.32	1.78	3.23	1.34	3.24	8.00	4.21
AUGUST	5.18	7.85	4.58	4.40	4.58	5.15	8.91	4.57	3.23	3.47	5.19
SEPTEMBER	12.38	7.35	10.80	14.44	13.05	11.83	9.12	5.14	.56	3.43	8.81
OCTOBER	7.90	10.41	6.06	4.26	2.04	9.43	4.90	6.30	3.30	6.78	6.14
NOVEMBER	3.68	7.67	3.50	8.61	3.62	4.35	2.90	5.20	7.92	3.82	5.13
DECEMBER	6.51	1.93	7.36	1.54	2.72	3.03	2.16	3.35	7.11	1.66	3.74
TOTAL	58.96	60.08	56.42	63.14	47.71	51.20	43.29	45.23	36.78	60.88	52.38

10-year means 52.38 Inches

Appendix II

PRINCIPAL AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS

COMMODITY	1954 Value $	1955 Value $	1956 Value $	1957 Value $	1958 Value $	Average value for previous 4 years $
Limes	441.60	520.54	309.86	192.90	312.50	386.22
Tomatoes ...	62.40	72.77	74.49	9.15	39.00	54.70
Coconuts ...	2,928.00	1,979.56	1,983.32	1,046.38	1,727.50	1,984.31
Rum	686.40	5,271.43	7,288.29	9,651.50	6,522.00	5,724.40
Livestock ...	231,188.80	176,382.17	147,611.48	109,865.90	120,727.50	166,262.09
Other Agricultural Products x. ...	29,629.80	24,362.02	29,542.75	10,617.00	10,509.63	23,537.89
Fish	18,993.60	10,267.80	15,353.66	8,815.00	7,146.75	13,357.51
Total	333,921.60	218,856.29	202,163.85	139,297.83	146,984.88	211,287.08

Notes: x, Includes forest products, fruit vegetables and ground provisions.

Appendix III

VALUE OF IMPORTS OF CERTAIN COMMODITIES

into the

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Foodstuffs for human consumption	1954 $	1955 $	1956 $	1957 $	1958 $	*Average for previous 4 years* $
Wheaten Flour ...	90,240	94,452.53	90,344.31	61,431.23	53,005.02	84,117.02
Pulses	1,440	7,244.54	6,900.98	3,763.99	6,643.37	4,837.38
Cornmeal (Maize)	7,680	7,171.95	7,229.44	4,559.45	3,251.10	6,660.21
Rice	13,440	9,347.52	13,054.72	9,528.39	9,833.74	11,365.16
Bread & Biscuits	8,160	9,555.46	11,847.98	5,732.88	5,601.40	8,824.08
Butter & Substitutes	7,680	8,728.89	9,850.48	6,636.08	6,664.30	8,223.86
Lard & Substitutes	14,880	12,374.74	10,762.87	7,787.64	7,316.64	11,451.31
Edible Oils ...	2,400	2,879.49	3,872.57	3,522.93	4,045.56	3,168.75
Preserved Milk ...	14,400	19,699.05	21,100.65	12,925.53	14,880.12	17,031.31
Cheese	5,280	5,787.39	5,651.22	3,880.95	4,639.22	5,149.89
Preserved Meat ...	12,960	18,872.50	21,033.34	12,082.30	17,388.15	16,237.03
Preserved Fish ...	5,760	5,398.30	11,093.62	5,197.75	5,970.43	6,862.42
Fruit & Vegetables	9,600	11,779.65	1,362.19	1,281.60	9,719.71	6,005.86
Coffee	3,360	3,123.87	5,493.70	3,346.67	2,977.65	3,831.06
Tea	480	639.98	824.16	439.80	378.87	593.73
Cocoa	2,880	2,825.26	2,234.45	1,652.95	1,721.24	2,398.16
Sugar	55,680	51,921.67	63,583.02	37,829.76	30,845.06	52,253.61
Total	256,320	271,802.79	286,239.70	181,599.90	184,881.58	273,925.87
Animal Feeding Stuffs	5,280	4,700.55	5,348.72	6,730.84	6,205.94	5,515.03
Fertilizers ...	—	19.17	—	980.40	—	—